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The Pilgrim and the Pilgrimage

By
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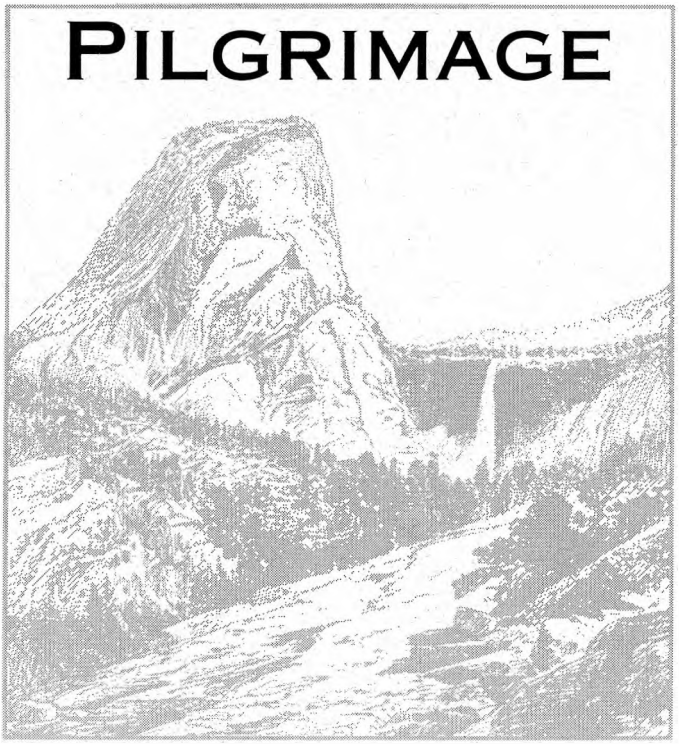

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THE PILGRIM AND THE PILGRIMAGE

Excerpts from a workshop presented by Emily B. Sellon
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Human beings are just beginning to be really self-determined beings rather than conditioned creatures dominated by their egocentric impulses, at the mercy of their "lower nature." Humans are just beginning to emerge from this state, pilgrims on the path to wisdom.

The Secret Doctrine, by Helena Blavatsky (HPB), tells us that highly evolved teachers are sent periodically to help us, to teach and encourage us along this path. Referred to as "Angels," "Rishis," "Mahatmas," "Prophets," "Avatars," "spiritual leaders," "enlightened beings," "incarnations," "higher beings," and so forth, these highly evolved beings were the founders of the world's great inspired religions. As we perceive these religions today, they may not seem as inspired as they once were but in going back to their origins we can see that the great religions all were inspired and given to humanity by advanced beings.

HPB says that these great beings who appear from time to time as exemplars and great teachers are but prototypes of advanced *human* development: what all human beings will be in the future. None of these great teachers ever claimed to be a unique, never-to-be-duplicated being. None of them ever said, "I am the one and only; there will never be another like me." They all came to mankind to teach the full potentiality of *human* development: what human beings can be, what they essentially are. So in a sense these higher beings are showing us our own future. The Buddha taught that every human being could accomplish what he had accomplished. And it is said that during his lifetime

many did accomplish the same task through the inspiration of his presence.

The evolutionary process can thus be quickened. It does not necessarily have to be a slow process. I have a strong feeling that such a quickening is occurring now, in our present day. *The Secret Doctrine* tells us that a significant quickening occurs always at the end of every century, and especially at the end of every millennium - which we are approaching. This century has been filled with more dramatic incidents and change than any other in historical times, by far. And there are certainly more people alive today, more people in incarnation at this time than at any other. We may feel ourselves very fortunate that our *karma* brought us into incarnation at this particular moment in time when there is a kind of self-awakening in so many human beings. It takes different guises, obviously. And it brings with it a flowering in science and the arts, which I don't perceive yet, especially in the arts. It may be there, in embryonic form, but I don't see it as yet.

Time is purely relational. Of course, time is also celestial and terrestrial. Our concept of time is built upon natural cycles, is it not? Diurnal cycles and the travel of the earth around the sun are the established natural facts within which we live. Whether we measure them in hours, or minutes, or some other form does not really matter. Every culture has measured time in some way. But the fact of the matter is that things do go in cycles. And whether it is the peak of a cycle or the beginning of a new cycle which is measured, whether we say it's going to be the year 2000 or 2001 or whatever, doesn't really matter. What it really means is that we have come to a point in our journey which has some significance. I think we can look at historical time as infinitesimal. So far as we know, historical time is really a very tiny segment of the totality of universal time. There obviously have been great epochs. For example, the dinosaurs, who vanished

suddenly. And nobody knows why. All kinds of theories exist, but nobody knows exactly what happened. Yet that was a major transition on the earth. And there obviously was a big transition some thousands of years ago when human beings really began to proliferate and the world became cultured. Before that it was much more a natural world. And today we can look at the population of the world, at the condition of the world, and see that we are getting to a crisis situation, a critical mass, regarding population, isn't that so?

We know that the earth has gone through all kinds of different phases in the past. There have been ice ages, the poles have changed, the continents have changed, the climate has changed, everything has changed. But that's all theoretical. It's all way back when we weren't around. It's interesting to study, but it does not affect us right now. (Unless the ozone layer does this or that.) Humans are interested in the immediacy of the moment. In some ways one might say that's stupid, because we've obviously been around for a while. Yet, this moment in time, this *now*, is the only slice of reality we really have. I always say, *now* is when the vertical axis in the human being exists, is present. Its presence is felt only in the present, because this is the moment in which we can act. The past we can't do anything about; the future is constantly receding, so in a way it is an imaginary quantity. *Now* is the only thing that has any reality. It is the timeless moment. Because it is of no duration, it has no extension in time. In a sense, *now* is a dimensionless point. However, change occurs, transformation occurs, illumination and enlightenment occur <u>now</u>. And they also occur only in the physical incarnation.

I am fully convinced that the attainment of insight, nirvana, enlightenment, *prajna*, divine illumination, or whatever you want to call it, is why HPB says over and over again: "Nature has to become Man." By this she means that only at that

moment when we are fully conscious, when all the elements of our being are fully engaged can transformation or enlightenment occur. It comes through like a flash of lightning. It is what happens in genuine mystical experience, the kind of thing that St. Francis had -- after which he was a different person. It is like a butterfly bursting out of its chrysalis: the same elements were present in the caterpillar, but they have been transformed by the action of Divine Impulse, if you wish, into fullest expression of their fundamental nature, into being what they truly are: a butterfly. By analogy, we are inherently spiritual butterflies.

In one sense, thus, time is irrelevant -- because what happens, happens in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. From the other point of view, however, time is all important: because there is a long preparation for that moment of illumination. Everything has to be brought together. All the elements of our being have to be united so that the sudden dissolution of the *ahankara*, the barrier of the personal ego, can be penetrated, or dissolved. This happens suddenly (the flash of lightning) when the Higher Self, the Soul, takes full command of all the elements of the human being. One can say that this is an evolutionary process which happens instantaneously, because it is outside of time. It is eternity presenting itself, if you like.

One might say that the evolutionary process is like the perfecting of a violin so that the sweet tone can make itself audible. That's a perfectly legitimate way to think of it. The world, the Cosmos, is filled with musical sound, but unless one has a medium, one cannot hear that sound. It has to manifest through its instrument. And the development of that instrument is a painstaking process. A musician has to learn his technique, otherwise he cannot make his music audible: he may be able to hear it within his own head, but nobody else can hear it. So the evolutionary process is a procedure through time.

But there is a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension to time. We move through time on a horizontal axis but the connection with that other pole, the vertical dimension, is always present, always available and accessible. Otherwise, growth through time would not be possible. The two have to come together in order to construct our three or four dimensional world. We live in a world that is conditioned or constructed in terms of these dimensions. Fritz Kunz always said that this was an actuality, a physical reality that we sometimes take for granted because we are so accustomed to it. It took a long time for a perfectly free spirit to become willing to imprison itself within the constraints of matter. We are terribly constrained by the limitations of our physical bodies and the world we live in. This is the cross man is hung on, the cross of matter. We have to live within this tiny film called the biosphere. We need certain conditions such as air to breathe and limitation of temperature -- we cannot survive in great extremes of heat or cold. So in one sense this is a very narrow and constrained world, a very narrow viable space. But it is the world we have created for ourselves.

Yet in another sense it is a world totally limitless in its possibilities. That's why small is wonderful. If we possess infinite expansion, as the Monad does, we can do anything. But we need delimitation in order to accomplish things. We need structure, we need form. People may say, "we want to escape from form!" -- but that's not true. In a way, what we want to do is appreciate the meaning of form: what is its role and function? And what are its constraints upon us? Therefore, it's not just a question of the destruction of form, it's a question of the transformation and the illumination of form, as well as an appreciation of what it has so far accomplished. Without the building of form, we would have no world. And so there is, in all of evolution, a formative tendency to develop ever more beautiful, more useful, more responsive forms that encourage the flowering of all the qualities of spirit. This is to be encouraged.

The *Mahatma Letters* insist that the human Monad and the Monad of the Globe are one and the same. The Mahatmas want us to understand that the progression of human life and spiritual development is absolutely tied to the Universal one. This concept is quite different from the Biblical picture that says first the world was created, and then man was created and put into the world so that he could use it for himself. This I think is a misinterpretation of the Biblical story, but it has been the prevalent one for many years: that Nature exists for human beings to explore and use -- like a house that was built so we can move in and do anything we want to it. The concept that human evolution is inextricably tied to natural evolution is a different perspective. Although the two are parallel, and actually come from the same source.

HPB has said some interesting things on this subject: "Nature unaided fails." and "Nature could never have evolved intelligence unaided." What does she mean by these statements? Our current science states that Nature evolved a nervous system, a brain, all of the complex biological systems gradually out of simpler forms. Well, what are simpler forms? Now they are beginning to think that even at the most primitive level there are very complex processes going on, even in creatures without a brain or spinal chord. For instance, very complex procedures go on in insects, even in worms and in fungi and all that kind of thing. One can go from the most primitive to the most complex within this "simple evolution." Teilhard de Chardin to some degree embraced this concept in which everything mounts, converging as it mounts.

But it's not that simple. How Nature produced a thing like the human brain is a tremendous mystery. How did it evolve? One can say there had to be certain requirements, but evolutionary theory really can't explain it. Stephen J. Gould uses the term "punctuated evolution" I think; and Dobzhensky uses the term

"transcendences," to explain the sometimes huge evolutionary leaps made when something new is started. But it is very difficult at times to see the connection between the two stages of such developments. For instance, there really has been no connection made between the dinosaurs and the mammals. Why did the dinosaurs die? Scientists used to say they were too clumsy and too heavy, but now they don't think that at all. The dinosaurs had brains and were very mobile. They did all kinds of things. They had nests and they took care of their young. All of the speculation saying they could not adapt is not true. So what really happened? *We don't know.* Perhaps an asteroid hit the earth. But then why didn't the dinosaurs reappear? Why did we get a wholly new kind of species? These are tremendous mysteries. When HPB says that Nature cannot do it by herself, she means that intelligence in Nature comes from *within.* Intelligence is not evolved physically by molecules sort of clumping together, and then after a while, one clump surviving better than another clump. It's not like that at all. It might never happen. It's like monkeys at a typewriter.

Fritz Kunz used to show a film demonstrating that the "beat" occurs before there is a heart to beat. The physical heart develops around the "beat," and then becomes the focal point for the rhythm, the heartbeat. The point here is that there has to be a fusion of the inner and the outer in order for anything really to be accomplished. Science has never taken consciousness into consideration. The word "consciousness" did not exist in any scientific literature. It just didn't appear, just as nobody ever talked about "life." Scientists talked about "living things," but they never talked about "life." That was considered epiphenomenal.

The fact of the matter is that mechanical systems do not survive unless energy is put into them. Otherwise entropy occurs: they run down. But living systems are not like that. Living systems

have a constant infusion of *something*. And it doesn't come necessarily. I mean, we need food, oxygen to breathe, that kind of thing, but the "beat" is something intrinsic to the creature. It is not something that has been added. So when HPB says, "Nature could never have evolved intelligence unaided," she is trying to say that intelligence is not a product of the brain -- which is of course what most scientific theories claim. Today, however, the whole concept of intelligence is becoming so much more complex that the mechanical version is not widely accepted anymore.

Fohat, the power of love and intelligence, can accomplish great things. It is not just an emotion, a good feeling, but a real power, a transforming power. I think the Dalai Lama is absolutely right when he says that if all human beings could feel compassion for one another, it would eliminate war, violence and social problems. This may sound terribly simplistic. But even though it has been very often selfishly misused by human beings -- love is nevertheless a tremendous power which has been developed by human beings gradually, over our whole evolutionary period. And we are still, I would say, at but midpoint in our development.

HPB talks about Buddhi (Intuitive Intelligence) as the major resource the Monad has for the human personality. Buddhi is the vesture of Atma through which one is able to have access to Atma, which is not of this world. Within this link of Buddhi, a fundamental characteristic of the Monad and perhaps the "heart of the soul," lies the focal point of the soul. Buddhi thus makes it possible for the soul to perceive its relationship to the Divine. Otherwise there would be no possibility for us to realize our identity with the Divine. How could one imagine the Divine? It is not perceptible, yet all human beings are somehow responsive to the idea that there is a Divine or Spiritual element in the world, though it has never been proven, never been seen, never been cognized. Nevertheless, Buddhi is that faculty of the soul which

makes it possible for Manas, the mind, to begin to understand its own true nature, its link with the spiritual domain. And when the mind turns itself toward the illumination of Buddhi shining upon the mind, shining through the mind, when the mind turns itself towards that, there is a big transformation in the soul. And when the mind is open to this insight, you get wisdom, prajna, enlightenment, illumination -- any of those characteristics which we know are real through the testimony of so many people.

And we have our own momentary or partial glimpses of that kind of wisdom. It transcends knowledge, it transcends information; it is a kind of light that illumines from above and makes a degree of clarity in our lives that is absolutely true for ourselves. When we open ourselves to these influences they become more and more real for us because they reflect our fundamental nature. Therefore, it is not anything that we are imagining for ourselves. It is something which we gradually begin to realize or appreciate -- a presence of truth in our lives. In our deepest and highest moments of insight, it becomes very real for us.

The evolutionary task for us as it is spelled out in *The Secret Doctrine* is really one of true glory. Because according to this, as slow as the progress may be for some who may spend life after life not making any real effort and not really learning from their experience, the evolutionary tide is nevertheless going to make even the slothful ones gradually more and more apprehend who they really are. The efforts that any single person makes are not, therefore, selfish. Any contribution that we make, any effort that we make toward even a tiny degree of spiritual insight is not for our own personal development, not for our own person, but for humanity as a whole -- this is the Bodhisattva Ideal. The "great Orphan Humanity" that *The Mahatma Letters* invoke, the great Orphan Humanity for whom we have to feel compassion -- the same compassion we might feel for ourselves -- we have to feel for others, and vice versa, because we are all engaged in the same

great work. We are all walking on the same path. We are all seeking the same destination, no matter how diverse our paths may be. But that is enriched by the fact that so many people contribute from so many different points of view. All of those contributions go to enrich the whole of life for all of us.

We judge so much on externals, on our performances. We tend to be very self-deprecating. We remember our failures much more than we remember our successes. But in a way, that's good. Because we learn from our failures, and very often we don't learn anything from our successes. That's probably why our failures loom large to us. But then we see them all out of proportion., we don't appreciate the changes that those failures have evoked in us. And so I would say that every Theosophist has to be an optimist, *really* an optimist, because you feel that nothing is lost, nothing is wasted.

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